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Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics.

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STATES RELATIONS SERVICE,
OFFICE OF EXTENSION WORK, SOUTH.
FARMERS' COOPERATIVE DEMONSTRATION WORK.
Washington, D. C.

GROWING TOMATOES, BEANS AND OKRA IN THE CLUB GARDEN.

To CANNING CLUB MEMBERS:

Letter No. 1 gave the first instructions for gardening. We asked you to keep it and in subsequent letters, read them carefully and begin at once to keep a record of all work done. A daily record book, B-511-i, has been made for you to use throughout the season and will be sent by your county agent for the asking. Here is the second letter of this series. As before, we are indebted to Mr. H. P. Thompson of the Bureau of Plant Industry for the directions which follow:

PREPARATION OF THE SOIL FOR TOMATOES.

If the land was not plowed in the fall, plow as early in the spring as possible and prepare it essentially by harrowing and dragging. Where the land was plowed in the fall re-plow it in the spring - then apply the manure and thoroughly mix it with the soil by disking and harrowing. Harrow and disk the soil as many times as is necessary to put it in the very best of condition and use a drag or roller to break up the clods. Where the land is well drained, level culture should be practiced, but where the soil is poorly drained, the plants should be set on ridges. The flatter the ridges the better, provided good drainage is secured. Never use narrow peaked ridges as these dry out too quickly.

FERTILIZERS.

Even where manure is used, commercial fertilizer should be applied as the manure will not supply all the elements of plant food needed. For soil that is manured at the rate of 2 to 3 loads on the one-tenth acre plat, it is advisable to apply 22 to 25 pounds of nitrate of soda, 50 to 100 pounds of 15% sulphate of potash, 25 to 30 pounds of muriate or sulphate of potash, to the one-tenth acre plat, and 20 pounds of cottonseed-meal in addition. Where the soil is well supplied with potash the amount of sulphate of potash could be reduced. On fairly rich soils use the smaller amounts suggested and on poorer soils use the larger amounts. The fertilizer can be applied broadcast or sown in the row. When distributed in the furrow, it should be well mixed with the soil by the cultivator along the row. After being well mixed with the soil the soil on the ridges should be thrown up over the rows and leveled off with a drag or roller.

SETTING THE PLANTS.

Before taking up the plants, the soil in which they are growing should be thoroughly soaked in order to make it adhere to the roots. Where the plants are grown in pots, cans, etc., the whole mass of soil should adhere to the plant when it is set out. If the plants are not grown in individual receptacles, as large a ball of soil as possible should be taken up with each plant.

The plants for the early crop should be set out as soon as all danger of frost is over. A good method to use in setting them is to open a furrow with a turn-plow and set them in this furrow. If the soil is dry, pour in about a pint of water around each plant. As soon as the water has soaked in, pull some dry soil around the plant.

The distance of planting depends on the method of culture. Where the plants are to be pruned to one or two stems and tied to stakes, make the rows 3 to 4 feet apart and set the plants 2 to 2½ feet apart in the row. If the plants are not to be trained to stakes, set them 3 to 4 feet apart in the row with the rows 4 feet apart.

CULTIVATION.

Cultivate the soil as often as necessary to keep the surface loose and free from weeds and grass. Frequent shallow cultivation should be followed at all times so that the moisture will be retained. Use a light cultivator rather than a shovel plow, sweep or turning plow. Some hand hoeing will be necessary to keep the weeds down and the soil loose around the plants and in the row. After every rain the soil should be cultivated to prevent baking and the subsequent loss of moisture.

TRAINING.

For the early crop of tomatoes for market, the plants should be trimmed to one or two stems and tied to stakes or other kind of supports. After selecting the one or two stems that are to bear the fruit, go over the plant about once a week and pinch out the shoots growing in the axils of the leaves (where the leaf joins the main stem). Keep the stems tied to the supports so they will not bend over or break. Use soft twine or strips of cloth for tying and do not draw it tight around the stem. Many growers in the south use stakes one inch or more square and about 5 feet long. These stakes are driven in the ground near the plant, about a foot or a foot and a half deep. By pruning and tying in the way mentioned, the plants can be more easily and thoroughly sprayed, better cultivation can be given, and the fruit will ripen earlier and be more uniform in size and shape. The fruit will be kept off the ground and can be more easily harvested. For canning purposes, where earliness is not of great importance, it is a question whether pruning and staking will pay, because as much or more fruit will be produced without the training.

HARVESTING.

Tomatoes for a local market should be well-colored and firm when picked but for a distant market they must be harvested before they become well-colored. For market, tomatoes should be put up in neat, attractive packages, pre-

ferably in half-peck baskets which can be shipped in crates of 4 or 6 baskets. The more uniform the fruit is in size, shape, and color, the higher the price received on the market. All deformed, cracked, or decayed tomatoes should be thrown out as such fruits will injure the sale of the first-class fruit. The tomatoes should be placed in the baskets in such a way that they will present the best appearance and will not shake about in the package. Do not put large and small fruit in the same package. For a very fancy trade, tomatoes are often wrapped in tissue paper before being placed in the basket.

For canning, the tomatoes should be full-ripe but not soft. Unripe fruit gives a straw-colored product when canned and over-ripe fruit makes a "mushy" product.

BEANS AND OKRA.

For growing beans and okra, the same general directions of preparation of soil, fertilization and cultivation as given for the tomato will be satisfactory. The seed of these two crops may be planted as soon as the soil has begun to warm up and all danger of frost is over. For a continuous supply of these vegetables, successive plantings, four or five weeks apart, should be made.

OKRA.

Plant seed 3 or 4 inches apart in rows $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 feet apart and cover to the depth of 1 to 2 inches according to the soil - the lighter the soil the deeper the seed should be planted. As soon as the plants are well established, thin to 12 to 14 inches apart for dwarf varieties and 18 to 24 inches for the large growing varieties.

The pods should be gathered when they are tender and this will ordinarily require picking every day. The varieties most commonly grown are the Tall green long pod, Tall green short pod, Dwarf green long pod, Dwarf green short pod, and the Lady Finger.

BEAN.

Plant the seed 2 to 4 inches apart in rows $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 feet apart and cover $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches deep. There are two types of bush beans grown in the gardens in this country - the wax and the green pod. The green pod is the better type for canning. The Stringless Green Pod and the Refugee are the best canning varieties.

The girls who do not wish to plant the entire tenth acre in tomatoes may have two or three other varieties of vegetables in addition to tomatoes. We suggest string beans and okra because these vegetables can be canned to advantage, the okra being combined with tomatoes in soup mixture.

Sincerely yours,

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O. B. MARTIN,

ASSISTANT IN CHARGE DEMONSTRATION CLUB WORK.

